

Wounds Improved: Dolphin Therapy Placement for a Patient Non-Compliant with Care

- ↑ Wounds improved significantly
- ↓ Reduced turning frequency
- ↑ Comfort and pain management improved

Introduction

Judith* (age 65) was admitted to hospital following a five-day long lie at home, before being discovered and taken to hospital. She was admitted with a respiratory tract infection and sepsis. She was in severe pain and suffered from long-term mental health issues including depression.

Judith was refusing all care and wanting to self-discharge. A decision was made to apply Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards as the multi-disciplinary team concluded this was necessary to protect her from harm, and in the circumstances there was no less restrictive alternative available.

On admission, Judith had a Category IV pressure ulcer to her sacrum and DTIs to both heels. These had all occurred as a result of the long lie.

**Judith is not the patient's real name*



Clinical Challenges

Judith was frail and refusing to be repositioned. This was in part due to pain. Her existing skin damage, which she was directly lying on for extensive periods, was at very high risk of deteriorating further. New skin damage was also a significant risk.

A support surface was required to help treat existing damage and prevent any further skin breakdown.

Patient Objectives

The objectives for Judith were to:

- **Treat existing skin damage**
- **Prevent further skin breakdown**
- **Improve pain management**
- **Improve compliance with care**
- **Reduce turning frequency**
- **Improve comfort**
- **Improve quality of sleep**

Introduction of the Dolphin Therapy Fluid Immersion Simulation Support Surface

Dolphin Therapy is a unique reactive support surface that simulates a fluid environment. Research has demonstrated that it prevents tissue ischaemia, even when the patient is nursed directly on a wound.¹

Data collected from over 3,000 patients showed that 97% of wounds which were nursed directly on the Dolphin Therapy surface healed, improved or remained static. Also from this data, where the same additional objectives were set as those for Judith, they were fully or partially met as below:²

- Improved compliance with care: **94%**
- Improved pain management, comfort, and sleep: **> 99%**
- Reduced turning frequency: **98%**

Judith was initially nursed on a dynamic mattress, but after three days the TVN asked for her to be transferred to Dolphin Therapy. This was because she felt a standard dynamic mattress would not be sufficient to meet Judith's skin care and other needs.

Judith remained on the Dolphin Therapy support surface for 73 days, until she was transferred to a rehabilitation facility. At the time of transfer, she was able to mobilise round the ward, the Category IV pressure ulcer and both DTIs had all improved significantly, and she had no new skin damage.

The objectives of improved pain management, comfort and reduced turning frequency were fully met, and those for improved compliance with care and sleep partially met. Once Judith's pain had reduced and she was more comfortable, she became more compliant with care overall, but there were still times when she refused interventions. She was periodically anxious and agitated throughout her hospital stay, which affected her ability to sleep.



Wounds improved



Reduced pain



No new skin damage

Summary

Dolphin Therapy was used to successfully treat Judith's wounds and prevent further breakdown. This was an excellent achievement given that she was refusing to be repositioned initially and spending extensive periods of time with her wounds directly on the support surface.

Reducing turning frequency was beneficial for Judith because she was more settled with less interventions. It also reduced moving and handling risks for staff, and allowed them to form a better rapport with Judith. In turn, this led to improved compliance with care, which improved further when she started to mobilise.

The TVN believed that Dolphin Therapy was the most appropriate choice of support surface for Judith, to treat and protect her skin and help manage the overall complexity of her care.

References

1. Mayes KL et al (2012). Cost effective care without clinical compromise: Incorporating the Dolphin Fluid Immersion Simulation Mattress System into the postoperative care of patients undergoing myocutaneous flaps. Poster presented at Wild on Wounds National Conference, September 12 - 15, 2012, Las Vegas, NV.
2. Medstrom (2023). Data on file.

To discover more about Dolphin Therapy and how Medstrom can support you, contact our Clinical Advisors 24/7/365 on:

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